

SEWING-
ROLE.

BY CHRISTINE H. CARPENTER.

A drowsy summer afternoon hung over the dainty little village of Mayville, nestled among the green Connecticut hills. The leaves of the clustering vines framing the pretty white cottages just stirred in the sunshine, while even the bees and butterflies crept to shelter in the hearts of the great red and white roses, faintly nodding to some occasional zephyr as it languished by. From the open window of Widow May's "best room" a hum of voices stole out upon the scented air, and within, more than a score of busy hands fashioned divers fabrics into fair shapeliness. It was the weekly sewing-circle of the Mayville church, for which a fair was in prospect, a fact that formed the secret of this feminine conclave. Who ever saw a sewing-circle without its little tidbits of gossip? This was no exception to the rule. Presently a cheery face looked up from its owner's glancing needle.

"Do you know," said she to her neighbor, "I've quite altered my opinion of Mrs. Wells lately? Pray don't start—she has not arrived yet."

"How is that? You used to think her the most extravagant woman in the village, and I'm not sure but you were quite right. To my certain knowledge she wears the most new dresses, new bonnets, and so costly, to say nothing of the style in which those children of hers are primped up. You don't pretend to imagine her husband can stand it so much better than others I might mention?"

"Oh! no; Mr. Wells is not rich—only comfortable."

"I can't afford two new dresses to my neighbor's one."

"Maybe you don't know how to economize."

"Economize! I'd like you to point out another woman in Mayville who can stretch out a dollar further than I can."

"Yes, I can do it."

"Just tell me, and I'll take a lesson right off."

"You might profit by it, too, as I have."

"Do tell!"

"It's Mrs. Wells."

"Mrs. Wells! That does beat my time—to set her up as my model! Now, I dare say, if one really knew, she spends just three times as much."

"No, she doesn't, nor in fact any more than you do."

"Oh, nonsense! How do you get over the four bonnets, and the dresses and fancy furbelows, one always sees about her? The little matron shook her head significantly. "No, no, Mrs. Brown, I calculate the whole matter in plain figures. Now, for instance: There were my two bonnets last year. Next thought as how I should have something better than the hideous things Miss Smith gets up in the village, so I went to New York. Well, there were two days lost just going and coming at the very time I was most wanted. I tired myself almost to death looking for something reasonable, and at last had to take the nearest to my means. I thought it would do well enough till I got home, and Mrs. Wells called on me next day with the very loveliest bonnet on her head I ever saw. It never cost less than twenty-five dollars in the city. I mean the gray velvet she had last fall."

"I know all about it. It didn't cost but six dollars, and it didn't come from the city."

"Six dollars! You must be dreaming! And where, in the name of creation, could any one get such a bonnet in Mayville? Then, again, when I was in the city I saw a dress something like that blue merino of Susie Wells' everybody liked so much. I thought I'd enough left to buy it for Ada. I knew the stuff wasn't more than fourteen shillings a yard, and it takes just four yards; but besides, there was the making and trimming. I went in and priced it. It was eighteen dollars."

"And Susie Wells' cost her mother only about nine."

"That beats me out and out. Where does she go to get such bargains?"

"Not very often out of Mayville."

"Why, I never see them. When I go to Miss Smith for anything new, most likely it's some notion she's borrowed from the Welles. I do believe they set the fashions for this village for dressmakers and all."

"Well, Mrs. Wells can do it if she likes, for the truth is she has a sure guide. This is the secret."

"Do tell!" suspending her work to listen.

"Yes, and what's more, Mrs. Wells doesn't buy half those new things ready-made; she makes them herself."

"Oh! it's all in gumption, then. I never had any."

"No, not that alone. I went down to the house yesterday to take tea, and we got chatting, and somehow we came to talk about economy, and I said I didn't see how some folks managed to make such a show, when others, doing quite as well in the world, couldn't. Now, you don't mean me?" said Mrs. Wells, laughing.

"Why, yes," said I bluntly: "I do. I can tell you, Mrs. Wells, I went on, 'Mayville people do think you are awful extravagant.' Why?" said she, "because you have so many new things, and make so costly, and the children are always furbelowed enough to cost a small fortune. Now, I'll warrant," said she, "that all mine and the children's new things together don't cost me any more than yours, or any other family in the village as large as mine." "Why, how is that?" said I. "Because I make every penny tell, and just because I've got an invaluable aid to give me the very best advice, and keep me acquainted with the newest fashions. It furnishes patterns and ideas, and tells what to get, and how to make up, so explicitly, that a body can't help understanding. I save all the cost and time and trouble of going to the city, for all I have to do is to consult my Mentor for shape, style and material—Past experience has proved to me that I

can rely upon it without a fear, and it is always full a month in advance, so that I have plenty of time for consideration. Send for the necessary articles, and there are the directions to make up. And, besides, I have the pleasure of always feeling fresh and presentable. I can always dress my children well and tastefully, because I spare myself one great expense, that of giving them out to be made, as I have within my reach such practical instructions, that it is a delight to connive and fashion for myself. Then I'm never at a loss for the boys either. If my means are limited, there is sure to occur an idea that helps me make a cheap suit come out quite jaunty and becoming. There are a hundred and one other notions to add effect to a toilet; how to cut and ornament dresses, aprons, socks, jackets, or any of the indispensables in a well regulated wardrobe, even to under-clothing. It puts to use all the odd ends of materials one may have. Nothing can go to waste. I wish you would take pity on me," said I, "and put me on the right track, for I've got tired of pinching and screwing to no purpose." With all my heart. I'm afraid you have always been, like many others, a penny wise and a pound foolish; but you have only to send three dollars, and purchase a year's subscription to DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE. That is the aid, counselor, and helpmate I've been telling you of."

At this juncture Mrs. Brown chanced to glance out of the window. "I have just finished my story in time," said she, her voice subsiding. "There is Mrs. Wells coming up the garden path; you shall have her own testimony."

Bonnet and mantle disposed of, and work in hand, the new comer was prepared for the consultation by an active rehearsal from Mrs. Brown of a portion of her own and her neighbor's recent discourse. Mrs. Wells' entrance had been the signal for the resolving of the several little groups of talkers into a general conversation. Not a few listened anxiously for her sentence upon Mrs. Brown's narrative.

"I am quite prepared to endorse all I said yesterday," returned she at its conclusion, smilingly surveying her auditors, "and I can even say more. Mrs. Brown kindly complimented me yesterday upon the arrangement of my table, and more than one of you praised the trifles in the way of pastry, and other refreshments I contributed to the refreshment table of our last year's fair. The household department of the Magazine was my guide; it is especially devoted to items of interest to housekeepers. You have seen such practical illustrations of the value of its various receipts, that I need scarcely dwell upon it."

"Where did you learn of the existence of your circle?" questioned Mrs. Hart.

"I read of it in the village paper."

"Oh, we don't take that."

"Not take the Mayville Times? I'm surprised. Why, it's to every one's interest to take the local papers. You get your money's worth over and over. I should as lief be out of the world as to be without the news. My husband says he sets as much store by them as I do by my DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY. That must have been the reason why Mr. Wells did so much better by his grain and hay than Mr. Hart. You see he had the advantage of knowing how to sell, and when and where to find a good customer, and all this through the paper, while neighbor Hart, even though he's quite as shrewd at bargaining had to trudge to look after all. Mr. Wells says he finds so many ideas of use to him about gardening, and then there are the quotations from the city markets. It won't do to trust to hearsay. You want a reliable source for such information. We watch the paper, and are generally just about right for a very good sale. Just make a trial of it, and if you don't confess that you wonder how you ever did without it, I'll pay the cost of your subscription."

Before any one could reply there was a slight stir at the doorway, and the next moment a chorus of voices welcomed the good shepherd of the Mayville flock among his people.

"What have you there?" said Jennie Kip, the pet and belle par excellence of the village, as, after the greetings were over, the reverend gentleman sat down before the table and began divesting a small packet he had carried of its wrapping.

"Something that I fancied might be of use and interest to you ladies in the purchase of your good work; DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE." There was a rapid interchange of glances among the needle-workers.

"I thought you disapproved of light reading," ventured Miss Kip, mischievously.

"So I do, except when, like the literary department of this Magazine, it is instructive, entertaining, and calculated to exert a strong moral influence over our minds. This Monthly is a great favorite at the parsonage. I am a regular subscriber, for I sincerely think we could do without it. What I presumed might be of special service now, was this department of fashions, about which I know but little, but which my wife affirms always contains the most valuable suggestions respecting wearing apparel."

"I have just been testifying to that before you came in," remarked Mrs. Wells. "And I remember a recommendation from a friend of mine in Greenfield. Her husband is a builder, and she writes me he is lauding the Architectural Department of the Magazine. He considers this feature alone renders it valuable, because its plans and diagrams are good and adaptable. My children hail its appearance quite as gladly as I do. I read aloud to them from its literary portion, because I find its general tone so pure and elevating. I think it a desirable addition to every household in Mayville."

"And I," chimed in the minister— "My boys and girls take special delight in its engravings. It has inculcated a taste for art among them. I think its refining influence, the variety it combines, and its neat dress, render it an ornament for any parlor-table in the village."

"Any one of its peculiarities—is its full-sized patterns, its brand and embroidery sheets, or twelve excellent sheets of music—is worth far more than the cost of a year's subscription," suggested Mrs.

Wells. "And besides all this, each subscriber receives a valuable premium."

"I shall subscribe," exclaimed Mrs. Brown.

"And I," said her neighbor.

The words were echoed from all parts of the room.

"Why not make up a club," suggested the pastor, "and give your orders to Mrs. Wells?"

"I should like that very much," resumed the latter. "I will tell you why, frankly. There are great inducements offered for this purpose. For twenty subscriptions at three dollars each, while every individual receives a premium, I should come into possession of a FAMILY SEWING-MACHINE. Such a treasure!"

"You are quite deserving of such a prize, as the first to establish the merits of the Magazine here," said several. In a few short weeks Mrs. Wells' sitting-room boasted of a sewing-machine, and each member of the club a copy of the magazine.

"How do you like it—how do you like it?" asked the various Mayvilleites, as they met after this important event. "It has all the virtues claimed for it. The fashion-gossip offers really new and acceptable ideas, because they emanate from the actual depot of the metropolitan modes, and are not a revised and garbled-over relapse of old styles. It is, in truth, an actual 'mirror of fashions.'"

Soon so said all Mayville, except Miss Smith, who had hitherto been quite successful in palming off her antiquated styles upon the villagers, and who now found her "occupation gone."

"What shall I do?" said she, wringing her hands in despair, to a sympathizing, gentle soul, who chanced to be a member of Mrs. Wells' club.

"I can not say, unless you take DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE, when you will be likely to find suggestions to help you out of your difficulty, as I must always do in my own case. Miss Smith, you had better think of it."

The result of this counsel was that Miss Smith sent in her subscription.

Early one bright Monday morning the good people of Mayville remarked that a marvelous change had come over the millinery and dress-making establishment they had of late almost ignored.

"How beautifully you have fitted up, Miss Smith," said her friend, who had been invited to take a look within.

"I've started afresh as a branch of Mrs. DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE, the headquarters of DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY. I'm very thankful to you for mentioning the Magazine to me, for you see it has helped me out of my trouble."

"How did you prosper?" asked the same friend, some time later in the month, "dropping in" to see if Miss Smith's hopes had been realized.

"Oh, I never did so well! Why, I can work with so much satisfaction to myself and every one of my customers, and I have such a variety of beautiful styles that even the ladies from the city, boarding hereabouts, find all they require."

Time flitted swiftly by, and again the sewing circle had met at Willow Mays.

"What a vast improvement there has been in our village since we have taken DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY," exclaimed Mrs. Brown, during a pause in the conversation. "Mrs. Hart, did you take Mrs. Wells' advice and subscribe for the village paper?"

"Yes, and I must say, it was just as she said—Mr. Hart and I have resolved never to do without it again. He thinks it saves him a great deal more than his false notion of economy ever did."

"That is my opinion of the Magazine. Besides we are certainly all brighter, and better, and happier, and wiser through its influence. It is the general remark. There is now one thing for which I have a great ambition. That is, to make up a club large enough to get, as a premium, an organ for the church. I have already got about it by applying to some of my friends. I find I have only to show a copy of the Monthly to convince them of its merits. It speaks for itself, and they have been so enthusiastic in their appreciation as to set their names down upon my list immediately. Will any of you aid me?"

Every voice chimed in assent. As women always do when they have a pet project at heart, they went to work with will and energy, and found their task so easy, that in a few days the entire subscription was on its journey to the publisher of DEMONSTRATOR'S MONTHLY, No. 839 Broadway, New York.

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